

AUG 28 1966

Approved For Release 2003/12/03 : CIA-RDP75-00001R000300470009-5

SAIGON MAY SLOW PACIFICATION PLAN

Cut Seen in Program to Win
Support of Peasants

Special to The New York Times

CANTHO, South Vietnam, Aug. 26—The controversial program for training South Vietnamese rural pacification workers will be cut back "to insure the quality" of training at the expense of quantity, authoritative sources predicted today.

Originally, enrollment at the Vietnamese Government's pacification training center was to have been almost doubled from its present level of 5,240 trainees by January.

Now, the sources said, enrollment will continue near the present level.

The original expansion plans reflected the emphasis at the Honolulu conference between President Johnson and Premier Nguyen Cao Ky on intensifying nonmilitary aspects of the Vietnamese war. The expected curtailment of the program was said to be largely the result of a lack of experienced instructors.

Training at Vungtau

At the training center, which is at Vungtau, a seaside resort 45 miles southeast of Saigon, pacification workers are given 13 weeks' training to prepare for work as 59-man teams that try to win over to the Government's side peasants who have been influenced by the Vietcong.

The center stirred controversy earlier this year, when its Vietnamese director, an employee of the Central Intelligence Agency, tried to get trainees to support a minor nationalist political group that opposed the Saigon Government.

The director, Maj. Le Xuan Mai, was dismissed and the C.I.A. yielded control of the center to the South Vietnamese Ministry in charge of pacification.

Vungtau alumni interviewed near this provincial capital in the Mekong River delta either said they had not heard of, or not been influenced by, Major Mai's political activity.

They were members of the first class of 59-man teams, which was graduated on May 21. Its enrollment was 4,700. The present class is to be graduated on Sept. 15. One other class will be trained this year.

A Delicate Question

The question of how fast to expand the pacification program is particularly delicate in light of the failure of the strategic-hamlet program of President Ngo Dinh Diem, who was overthrown and killed in a coup d'état three years ago.

Under pressure from the Diem Government, local officials hastily grouped large numbers of peasants into ill defended hamlets, many of which the Vietcong found easy to control.

Now the 59-man teams are being trained to work more thoroughly to make hamlets resist the Vietcong. They are taught to win the peasants' favor by giving out medicine, livestock, food, and other aid.

Officials here and in Saigon argue that it is too early to appraise the over-all performance of the teams. But talks with team members and peasants in this province, Phongdinh, indicated strengths and weaknesses in implementation of the program.

Hamlet residents were grateful for the aid of the teams. But at least one team had moved out of a hamlet after two months without having managed to do its work in one corner of the hamlet which is still used as a base by a Vietcong squad. Another team had worked in a hamlet by day but many of its members spent the nights in a neighboring community. The 59-man teams are supposed to live full time in the communities whose loyalty they are trying to win.